

6. DISCUSSION

This report has outlined the nature of the aquarium fish industry in the Great Barrier Reef Region as it is presently understood.

It is readily apparent that tropical reef fisheries management strategies do not have an equivalent theoretical basis to temperate water fisheries. The absence of stable equilibrium populations and pelagic larvae (Johannes, 1978), suggests that population fluctuations may be a normal occurrence. Control measures seeking to maintain an equilibrium population would therefore be difficult to justify and might be extremely difficult to implement. It is therefore necessary to evaluate the 'normal' range of fluctuation to determine whether deviations exceed this range.

The collection of base data appears to be a logical step in gathering information on collecting in the GBRR. With the prospect of growth in the Australian tropical marine aquarium fish collecting industry, research should be undertaken to ensure the successful management of the industry in the future.

The basic data requirements to enable directed management decisions to be made are a detailing of the catch with associated effort, indices of abundance, age composition and species identification (Larkin, 1981). Without such data it is impossible to say whether any future regulation of aquarium fish collecting is required in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zones, (Marine National Park 'A' and 'B' Zones; Marine National Park Buffer Zones, Scientific Research Zones, and Preservation Zones), in which recreational or commercial aquarium fish collecting is not permitted, will ensure that certain areas are left untouched, but will also provide comparisons for those zones in which collecting is permitted.

Future research into aquarium fish collecting should provide information on specific reefs, most importantly, those reefs which are being most heavily collected. With such information, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and other agencies will be able to make sensible, data-based management decisions regarding aquarium fish collecting and the well being of the reef.